

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 CCO-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 ACDA-05 OMB-01 IO-11 /073 W

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O R 281620Z FEB 76 ZFF4

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4675

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA DOD WASHDC

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJ: POLITICAL CRISIS

REF: BA-1325 (NOTAL)

1. SEVERAL CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS INCLUDING TROCCOLI OF UCR HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT EFFECTIVE ACTION IN CONGRESS CLEARLY NOT POSSIBLE AND THAT THEY REGARD COUP AS INEVITABLE. TROCCOLI COMMENTED THAT ANNOUNCEMENT FEB 26 THAT ANTI VERTICALISTA PERONISTS WILL SUPPORT JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS IS VIRTUALLY MEANINGLESS. JOINT SESSION WILL NOT EVEN BEGIN UNTIL NEXT WEEK AT EARLIEST. SENATOR LUDER LAST NIGHT - FEB 27 - INDICATED IT MIGHT NOT BE CONVENED UNTIL MARCH 8, AND EVEN WHEN IT CONVENES IT IS ONLY CHARGED, IN EFFECT, WITH STUDYING CRISIS AND RECOMMENDING SOLUTIONS. "JOINT SESSION," TROCCOLI CONCLUDED, "IS ONLY A FACADE. CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION HAS ALREADY BEEN DISCARDED. WE ARE NOW SIMPLY WAITING FOR THE INEVITABLE TO HAPPEN." (NOTE: WHETHER COUP IS INEVITABLE OR NOT, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT MOST POLITICIANS NOW BELIEVE IT IS.)

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2. ACCORDING TO TROCCOLI, SEVERAL OTHER RADICALES AND ANTI-

VERTICALISTA PERONISTS, KEY FACTOR IN DECISION OF ANTI-VERTICALISTAS NOT TO SUPPORT MOVE IN CONGRESS TO OUST MRS. PERON WAS CONVICTION ON THEIR PART THAT COUP WAS INEVITABLE NO MATTER WHAT THEY DID (SEE REFTTEL). THIS, IN TURN WAS RESULT OF FAILURE OF MILITARY TO GIVE THEM ANY KIND OF GUARANTEES. SPOKESMEN FOR WORKING GROUP AND DISSIDENT LABOR DEPUTIES REPORTEDLY ASKED MILITARY LEADERS WEEK OF FEB 15-21 FOR ASSURANCES THAT IF THEY, THE DISSIDENT PERONISTS, JOINED IN CONGRESSIONAL INITIATIVE TO OUST MRS. PERON AND BRING IN LUDER, ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT OVERTHROW LUDER GOVERNMENT FURTHER DOWN ROAD. VIDELA, VIOLA, MASSERA DNA OTHER SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS REASONED THAT NATIONAL CRISIS SO ACUTE AND LUDER'S MANDATE WOULD BE SO WEAK THAT CHANCES WERE VERY HIGH HE TOO WOULD FAIL, LEAVING THE MILITARY WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO TAKE OVER. THUS, WHILE THEY ENCOURAGED ANTI-VERTICALISTAS TO SUPPORT ACTION IN CONGRESS THEY COULD NOT GIVE ASSURANCES LATTER HAD WANTED. ANTI-VERTICALISTAS

THEREFORE, RESIGNED THEMSELVES TO COUP AND ARE PLAYING FOR THE FUTURE

WITH LATTER IN MIND, THEY WILL TAKE NO ACTION WHICH COULD BE USED TO UNDERCUT THEIR POSITION WITH PERONIST MOVEMENT. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE MRS. PERON BUT WILL NOT SUPPORT MOVE TO OUST HER. IN GENERAL, THEIR ATTITUDE NOW SEEMS TO BE ONE OF "IF WE ARE ALL GOING DOWN ANYWAY, LETS DO NOTHING WHICH WILL FURTHER DIVIDE THE PERONIST MOVEMENT IN THE PROCESS."

3. QUESTION NOW LARGELY ACADEMIC ONE, BUT MANY OBSERVERS, INCLUDING EMBASSY, STILL OF VIEW THAT REASONS GIVEN BY ANTI-VERTICALISTAS ARE NOT PERSUASIVE. WITH OR WITHOUT MILITARY ASSURANCES, REMOVING MRS. PERON BY CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS AND BRINGING LUDER WAS AT LEAST WORTH A TRY. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, WHAT ANTI-VERTICALISTAS HAVE DONE IS TO OPT OUT.

4. REPORTS EMBASSY IS GETTING FROM VARIOUS SOURCES CLOSE TO MILITARY TEND TO COINCIDE WITH THOSE OF DAO REGARDING SHAPE OF FUTURE MILITARY GOVT. AND DIRECTION OF ITS POLICIES. ACCORDING TO OUR REPORTS, GENERAL VIDELA, RATHER THAN VIOLA, WILL BE PRESIDENT. AT LEAST INITIALLY, CABINER REPORTEDLY WILL BE ALL MILITARY-- WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ECON MINISTER. PAPAL NUNCIO TOLD AMB
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HILL FEB 27 HE UNDERSTANDS ADMIRAL MONTES WILL BE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER (DAO HAS SIMILAR REPORT). CONGRESS WILL BE CLOSED, BUT POLITICAL PARTIES WILL CONTINUE TO FUNCTION (THOUGH POSSIBLY WITHIN NARROWED PARAMETERS). IN GENERAL, IT NOW APPEARS THAT MILITARY WILL FOLLOW RELATIVELY MODERATE LINE.

5. BOTH UCR AND ANTI-VERTICALISTA PERONISTS HAVE TOLD EMBOFF THEY PLAN TO GO ON RECORD AS BEING AGAINST COUP BUT THEN TO ACCEPT IT

AND TO COOPERATE TO EXTENT POSSIBLE WITH MILITARY GOVT. AS TROCCOLI PUT IT: "WE DO NOT WANT TO ROCK VILELA'S BOAT; ON CONTRARY, WE WANT HIS GOVT TO SUCCEED. HE IS A REASONABLE, MODERATE MAN AND WE PREFER HIM TO ANY OF THE HARDLINERS WHO MIGHT TAKE HIS PLACE IF INITIAL PHASE OF MILITARY ADMINISTRATION GOES BADLY."

6. WHAT MILITARY WILL DO WITH MRS. PERON NOT CLEAR. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE INDICATED THEY BELIEVE DECISION MADE NOT RPT NOT TO LET HER LEAVE COUNTRY. NUNCIO TOLD AMB HILL HE UNDERSTOOD SHE MIGHT SIMPLY BE DETAINED AT MILITARY RESORT AREA SUCH AS ASCOCHINGA IN CORDOBA FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD. "IF THEY LET HER GO BACK TO SPAIN, SHE AND LOPEZ REGA COULD CREATE PROBLEMS FOR NEW GOVT WHICH IT WOULD RATHER AVOID," HE NOTED.

7. POSITION OF USG: ON WHAT MAY BE EVE OF COUP (WHETHER IT TAKES PLACE WITHIN DAYS OR WEEKS), EMBASSY BELIEVES USG IS IN GOOD POSITION

NONE OF THE MAJOR PARTIES OR RESPONSIBLE SECTORS ARE ACCUSING USG OF BEING BEHIND IT. ON CONTRARY, SEVERAL RADICALES AND PERONISTS HAVE STATED THEIR CERTAINTY THAT USG HAS STOOD BY AS CLOSE FRIEND WISHING THEM THE BEST BUT HAS NOT INTERVENED IN ARGENTINA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN ANY WAY. WE BELIEVE SEC KISSINGER'S RECENT ACCEPTANCE OF LUNCHEON INVITATION WITH QUIJANO CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THIS ATMOSPHERE. OUR STOCK WITH DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN FORCES THEREFORE REMAINS HIGH, BUT AT SAME TIME OUR BRIDGES TO MILITARY ARE OPEN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUENOS01373
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760076-0478
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976022/aaaaabls.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <21 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL CRISIS
TAGS: PINT, MPOL, AR, US, (PERON, MARIA ESTELA MARTINEZ DE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006